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The Maharaja of Kolhapur and the Non-Brahmin Movement 1902–10

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THE British Indian empire, like the empires before it, depended on a measure of collaboration with the ruled. But the raj's systems of collaboration were neither static nor uniform. In the decade after 1900 some of the Indian princes, and the Maharaja of Kolhapur in particular, worked closely with the British to stem the rising tide of militant nationalism. This essay attempts to uncover the reasons for this collaboration—reasons which suggest that collaboration was always a conditional bargain, reflecting the immediate interests of both sides.

In 1900 the native states of India covered two-fifths of the sub-continent and contained one-third of its population. Even in the heyday of fire-eating imperialism doubts had been raised about the wisdom of formally acquiring all of India, and subsidiary alliances and the strategy of the ring-fence had been as much part of British policy towards the native states as had been the imperiousness of a Dalhousie. Non-intervention was generally accepted as desirable in principle, although not always possible in practice. After the mutiny the era of annexation was over; the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 and Canning's adoption sanads of 1862 became charters of princely rights. Henceforth the preservation of native states was never in doubt, although the British sometimes deposed a prince if he proved to be disloyal or grossly incompetent.

In time the British came to look again at the potentialities of the native states as a political force. Canning had pioneered the way with his famous 'breakwaters in the storm' thesis, which saw the states as the saviours of the raj in the mutiny. Lytton, viceroy from 1876 to 1880, developed this theme. Like Canning, he saw that the princes might help to give the British raj legitimacy and a genuinely indigenous flavour. He thought that the native princes were the natural leaders of the people, capable of commanding obedience and affection both from their own subjects and from the Indian populace at large. This, accord-

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ing to Lytton, was a powerful argument for closer collaboration with them:

> Politically speaking, the Indian peasantry is an inert mass. If it ever moves at all, it will move in obedience not to its British benefactors, but to its native chiefs and princes, however tyrannical they may be. . . . To secure completely, and efficiently utilise, the Indian aristocracy is, I am convinced, the most important problem now before us.[1]

The Government of Bombay, which supervised Kolhapur, did not respond immediately to Lytton's call for friendlier ties between the raj and the princes, fearing that the chiefs might interpret such a policy as a licence to misbehave. The first sign of a change in Bombay's attitude was when Sir James Fergusson appointed the Thakur of Limbdi to the Bombay Legislative Council in 1884.[2] This policy of giving official honours to native chiefs was continued by Fergusson's successor, Lord Reay. Reay also hoped that the Rajkumar College, recently established at Rajkot, might become for the chiefs an 'avenue to civil employment under our Government'.[3] In 1885 the Imperial Service Troops scheme was launched, by which a number of Rajputana, Kathiawar and Punjab states agreed to maintain detachments of troops to be used in the defence of the Empire. Later, Sir George Clarke, Governor of Bombay between 1907 and 1913, tried to give the practice of private consultation between the chiefs and government institutional form in an advisory council composed of princes and other notables, believing that such a body, 'if worked well . . . can be of use'.[4] But this ambitious scheme, which mirrored Lytton's earlier proposal, was not liked by London; Morley put it into cold storage and it was not taken out again until the time of the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms.

The conservative tradition in British feudatory policy persisted throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, but it was not until the end of the century that it prevailed. While India remained politically stable there was less need to use the princes (as they had been used during the mutiny) to bolster the British position. Princely support was viewed as a luxury, not a necessity.

[1] Lytton to Salisbury, 11 May 1876. Lady Betty Balfour (ed.), *Personal and Literary Letters of Robert First Earl of Lytton*, Vol. II (London, 1906), p. 21.

[2] Fergusson wrote to the Thakur: 'My motive for offering it [the Legislative Council seat] to you is my sense of your abilities, acquirements and good administration, and my desire to mark that sense in a public manner.' Quoted in E. Sharpe, *Thakore Sahib Shri Sir Daulat Singh of Limbdi Kathiawar* (London, 1931), p. 43.

[3] W. W. Hunter, *Bombay 1885 to 1890: A Study in Indian Administration* (London, 1892), p. 93.

[4] Clarke to Morley, 28 October 1908. Morley Papers, Mss. Eur. D 573 (42E), India Office Library [hereafter IOL], London.

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By the turn of the century new factors altered the situation and helped to revive plans for giving the princes a modern role. The most important factor was the rise of a more militant nationalism in Bengal and western India, which challenged the essentially moderate politics of the early Congress. With its advent, official policy towards Congress politicians changed from benevolent patronage to a growing, and hardly disguised, hostility. The support which the raj had once enjoyed from the majority of the politically-minded now seemed to have been transferred to its critics, in particular to the more extreme wing of the Congress. Congress moderates, such as G. K. Gokhale, failed to inspire confidence in their loyalty and effectiveness. Sir George Clarke repeatedly complained to Morley that his government seemed to have lost all influential support. In July 1908, describing the recent bout of terrorism supposedly inspired by the extremists, Clarke claimed that the moderates, 'influenced by the general upheaval', were no longer willing to 'give us the active support which we expect'.[5] Later that month he again voiced his misgivings about the moderates:

> There is really no Moderate party which counts and the so-called moderates have been terrorized into silence since the Surat fracas. In their hearts these people rejoice at the prosecutions of the Extremists. In public they say nothing and they do not range themselves on the side of law and order at [a] time like this.[6]

Faced with this situation, government was keen to find loyal allies capable of winning friends and influencing people. The princes seemed a possibility. They were the most conservative element in India, obviously opposed to any popular participation in the legislative process. At the same time they were respected by peasants and intellectuals alike. Even the most outspoken nationalist newspapers were careful to restrain their criticisms of native administrations. The moment had clearly arrived for a working alliance between the raj and the princes. But how was this to be accomplished? Lord Lamington, Governor of Bombay in the early years of the twentieth century, had thought that the way for it must be prepared by making feudatory policy more liberal.

> Looking to our general attitude towards the Chiefs I sh[oul]d like . . . to allow [them] . . . to be more trusted and not [so] closely bound down by regulation. The British are always anxious to enforce their standard of virtue on others, but the Chiefs sh[ou]ld not be screwed up too [much] . . . at the expense of increasing their irritation. There are two reasons for this.

[5] Clarke to Morley, 10 July 1908, Morley Papers, Mss. Eur. D 573 (42E), IOL.
[6] Clarke to Morley, 31 July 1908, Morley Papers, Mss. Eur. D 573 (42E), IOL.

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First, their loyalty and devotion are undoubtedly of real value and are at the same time a set off to the utterances of the Congress Party. Secondly, their administrations are an excellent foil to ours. . . .[7]

Clarke, his successor, agreed, but saw that the princes would have to be given something solid in return for their support. 'The native Princes of India', he declared, 'are now our natural allies by force of circumstances and can be fully trusted as such provided we treat them properly.'[8] The Political Department, with its tradition of benevolent paternalism, was sceptical about the new policy. But once Curzon had gone, it was only a matter of time before the advocates of liberalism had their way.[9] As Clarke himself confidently remarked: 'With the advent of Mr. Butler [as Foreign Secretary] . . . the bad traditions of the Political Department will rapidly disappear.'[10]

The growth of militant nationalism was not the only factor behind the change of policy. During the three decades after 1875 the chiefs as a body were becoming increasingly anglicized in their outlook and social habits, and were now capable of much more contact with European officials. Moreover, many of the more progressive Indian chiefs had begun to master the technique of the new diplomacy in negotiating with the British. Unlike the chiefs of Lytton's day, the post-1900 generation of Indian rulers was articulate as well as available; it had an important contribution to make to the politics of India.

Further, there was the question of the constitutional reforms, which the British had at last been pressed into considering. If, as seemed likely, the raj was going to make concessions to its critics, then surely, it was argued, it should balance these with concessions to more powerful, if less vocal, supporters. Valentine Chirol stressed:

How important it is to associate the Princes of India with the purposes of our Indian policy has seldom been more clearly shown than during these last troublous years when the forces of disaffection have revealed themselves as a serious public danger.[11]

Moreover, it was obviously 'impossible to enforce a more rigid control

[7] Lamington to Morley, 13 September 1905, Lamington Papers, micro. 675, IOL.
[8] Clarke to Morley, 25 December 1907, Morley Papers, Mss. Eur. D (42C), IOL.
[9] Claude Hill of the Bombay Political Service, and Louis Dane, Foreign Secretary, Government of India 1902–05, had begun to react against Curzon's restrictive policy towards the feudatories. But the change was marked once Minto became Viceroy and Clarke Governor of Bombay. H. O. Quin, Political Secretary, Government of Bombay 1908–09, and Harcourt Butler, Foreign Secretary, Government of India 1908–10, were able to carry out a more liberal policy towards the princes.
[10] Clarke to Morley, 28 October 1908, Morley Papers Mss. Eur. D 573 (42E), IOL.
[11] Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest* (London, 1910), pp. 189–90.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

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over the feudatory States at the same time as we are delegating larger powers to the natives of India under direct British Administration'.[12] Lovat Fraser was to make the same point more forcibly still. 'We cannot', he wrote, 'on the one hand announce our intention of giving greater liberty to the people of British India, and on the other, turn the screw upon the Indian princes.'[13]

During the troubles that beset the raj after the partition of Bengal in 1905 the princes proved active propagandists in the imperial cause. In 1905 the Sangli Darbar prohibited students in the local high school from taking part in political movements, such as the Shivaji festival and the swadeshi agitation, on pain of being expelled or refused permission to sit for the matriculation examination.[14] In the same year Junagadh published a circular condemning swadeshi.[15] Two years later Mysore introduced a reactionary Press Act which shocked liberals who had till then admired the state's political enlightenment.[16] In 1909, thirty-nine suspects were tried in Gwalior for terrorism.[17] In August 1909, an attempt to co-ordinate policy led to an exchange of letters between Minto and leading Indian chiefs on methods of suppressing sedition. The Raja of Jawhar, intent on putting this policy into practice, issued a proclamation in February 1910 warning his subjects to be on their guard against 'baneful influences' from outside and calling on them to help the authorities of British India to oppose the 'common danger'.[18]

The Kolhapur raj, however, came to be more actively associated with the imperial cause than most of its counterparts. The reasons for this lie in local political development. Kolhapur occupied a unique position in the hierarchy of Indian states. By the standards of Baroda, Hyderabad or some of the Rajputana states, it was not large, having an area of just over 3,200 square miles and a population of about 800,000. But its ruling dynasty was directly descended from the revered seventeenth-century Mahratta leader Shivaji, and this gave the state a political eminence out of all proportion to its size. Descendants of the old leaders of the Mahratta Confederacy, such as Holkar, Maharaja of

[13] Lovat Fraser, *India Under Curzon And After* (London, 1911), p. 215.

[14] *Kesari*, 3 October 1905, Bombay Native Newspaper Reports [hereafter BNNR], 1905.

[15] *Gujarati*, 17 December 1905, BNNR, 1905.

[16] A Bangalore Correspondent, 'The Mysore Press Act: How to Deal with Indian Seditious Writing', *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, Vol. XXVII (January–April 1909), pp. 282–3.

[17] *The Annual Register* (London, 1909), p. 387.

[18] The Raja of Jawhar to the Political Agent, Thana, 5 February 1910, Bombay Political Department [hereafter BP], 1910, 114, C43, Maharashtra Secretariat Record Office [hereafter MRO], Bombay.

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Indore, and the Gaekwar of Baroda, held Kolhapur in high esteem.[19] Kolhapur was officially regarded as the premier state in western India.[20] The Bombay Government saw that Kolhapur was a valuable ally, capable of wielding enormous influence over western India.

Another reason for Kolhapur's closer association with the raj is to be found in the Darbar's relations with the Brahmins, who monopolized most of the high administrative offices in the state. Shri Shahu, the first Chhatrapati to rule over Kolhapur for nearly three decades, was intensely proud of his Maratha lineage, and resented the way certain Brahmins, particularly Chitpavans, had come to dominate the administration during the later nineteenth century.[21] On his accession in 1894 he determined to champion the Maratha cause and where possible to replace Brahmins by Marathas and other non-Brahmins in the state service. Shahu's campaign was not, at first, overtly anti-Brahmin. But pushing up Marathas meant pulling down Brahmins, so in time the Darbar was bound to clash with the leaders of the Brahmin community.

Shahu Chhatrapati's non-Brahmin campaign was watched with interest by the Bombay Government. Brahmins dominated the administrative services not only of Kolhapur but of the Presidency as a whole.[22] Such a widespread hold on office by Brahmins, who also played a leading part in politics, worried the Bombay government. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Indian politics was still largely the preserve of a Westernized élite composed of lawyers, teachers, students and civil servants. As the chief beneficiaries of higher learning the Brahmins were naturally prominent in these politics. Politicians in western India, such as Tilak, Gokhale, Agarkar and Kharparde, tended to be Brahmins; so too were a large proportion of the writers and students convicted of political crimes by the Indian government. In the thinking of officials such as Sir William Lee-Warner or Sir George Clarke, and of publicists like Valentine Chirol, the Brahmins as a class

[19] See, for example, a speech by the Raja of Dewas (senior) another Mahratta prince, quoted by E. M. Forster, *Hill of Devi* (London, 1965), pp. 39, 55.

[20] In 1896 Kolhapur was raised to the status of a first-class Political Agency. A decade later it was gazetted a Residency. Minute by J. H. du Boulay, Acting Political Secretary, 23 February 1909, BP, 1909, 51, C706, MRO.

[21] Prime responsibility for this lay with Rao Bahadur Barve, Diwan of Kolhapur in the 1870s, who 'filled almost every public office in the State with his caste-fellows'. *Times of India*, 26 October 1906. However, the British, who administered the state between 1866 and 1894, did nothing to discourage Barve's activities.

[22] The Public Service Commission found that in Bombay Presidency 41.25 per cent of the deputy collectors were Brahmins, as were 75.5 per cent of the mamlatdars; and seventy out of 104 subordinate judges were Brahmins. *Proceedings of the Public Service Commission* (Calcutta, 1887), IV, Sect. I, B, 71, 91.

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were associated with extremism, and were thought to be disloyal.[23] In 1894, when a scheme for the grading of subordinate posts in the Kathiawar Political Agency was being drawn up, Lee-Warner, then Political Secretary, urged government to 'correct the preponderance of . . . Brahmins in Political employ'.[24] In 1906 Lamington confessed to Morley that it came to him as a 'revelation to find how the Brahmins work craftily for their own ends for purposes of disaffection even in the govt. Secretariat'.[25] The problem persisted. In 1910 Bombay decided to suggest to the Government of India that the number of Brahmins entering the public service be restricted. Harcourt Butler declared himself to be 'entirely in agree[ment] with the Bombay Government' in the matter, since he was convinced that 'the Mahratta Brahmin [was] getting a foothold in the Native States',[26] and Jenkins, in the Home Department, had already stated that the measures proposed by Bombay had been 'too long delayed'.[27] For the Bombay Government, Kolhapur's tussle with the Brahmins was relevant to the wider conflict between the government and its enemies. As Lamington observed to Morley,

> a chief in these days does not have a bed of roses, when there are ever intriguing and designing subjects [to contend with]. But Kolhapur has opposed to him Tilak and the disloyal Brahman class, and is beset by crafty schemers. In common fairness and for our own interests we should support men like Kolhapur and [his brother] Kagal, for not in this Empire will there be found two more honourable and straightforward men.[28]

The main circumstance, however, that influenced Kolhapur's relations with the raj in this period was the position of the Kolhapur feudatories, four large and seven smaller jagirs, possessing a degree of independent jurisdiction but owing nominal obedience to their suzerain, the Maharaja of Kolhapur. The four most important feudatories were Vishalgad, Bavda, Kagal and Ichalkaranji.[29] The Maratha family of Ghatge were established in Kagal, and Shahu himself was the eldest son of Shrimant Jayasingrao Abasaheb Ghatge, Chief of

[23] Chirol, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

[24] Minute by Lee-Warner, 11 May 1894, BP, 1894, 93, C181, MRO.

[25] Lamington to Morley, 13 May 1906, Lamington Papers, micro. 675, IOL.

[26] Minute, 4 January 1911, Foreign Department of the Government of India [hereafter 'Foreign'], Internal A, March 1911, 5, National Archives of India [hereafter NAI], New Delhi.

[27] Minute, 28 September 1910, Foreign Internal A, March 1911, 5, NAI.

[28] Lamington to Morley, 13 May 1906, Lamington Papers, micro. 675, IOL.

[29] Vishalgad paid Rs 5,000 per annum in tribute to Kolhapur, Bavda paid Rs 3,420, and Kagal and Ichalkaranji each paid Rs 2,000. J. M. Campbell (ed.), *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. XXIV (Bombay, 1877–1904), pp. 245–6.

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Kagal until his death in 1885. Since Maharaja Shivaji V of Kolhapur had no heir, in 1884 his family adopted Ghatge's eldest son to rule Kolhapur, and consequently Shahu's younger brother succeeded to Kagal.[30] However, of the other feudatories, Vishalgad and Bavda were held by Deshastha Brahmins whose families had traditions of high office in Kolhapur itself,[31] and Ichalkaranji, which proved the most jealous of its privileges, belonged to a Chitpavan Brahmin family.[32]

Before 1862 the larger feudatories were closely supervised by Kolhapur, but a new treaty between Kolhapur and the Government of India signed in that year transferred all residuary powers of jurisdiction, hitherto exercised by the Darbar, to the British.[33] In 1894, soon after the accession of Shahu, the Darbar tried to win back the jurisdiction taken away in 1862.[34] In November 1895, the Maharaja wrote to Lord Harris:

> Recently Government have been pleased to restore to me life and death powers as a mark of confidence in me, and, as I believe, I have competent officers and those troublous times have gone away. It would, therefore, I trust, seem not unreasonable if I request Government to restore to me the residuary criminal jurisdiction in the Feudatory States which is now exercised by the Political Agent.[35]

As a gesture of goodwill to the young ruler, Harris had already agreed to restore to the Darbar the powers of a high court in all civil cases arising in the feudatories. Having conceded this much, the government saw no reason to hold on to criminal jurisdiction, and thus this too was restored in 1903. The Darbar took this as a licence to deal with the feudatories as it pleased. So construed, the arrangement might have marked another important step forward in 'rehabilitating the State in its old prestige'.[36] But the Bombay government reconsidered the matter; they now decided that giving back the Darbar the entire residuary jurisdiction had been premature. After a lengthy correspondence, it was

[30] A. B. Latthe, *Memoirs of His Highness Shri Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaja of Kolhapur*, Vol. I, (Bombay, 1924), pp. 23–6.

[31] The chief of Vishalgad was styled the Pant Pratinidhi, and his family name was Jaykar. Malkapur, his headquarters, had once been the capital of the Kolhapur raj. Bavda's chief, the Pant Amatya, belonged to the Bhadanekar family. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* Vol. XXIV, pp. 245–6.

[32] Ichalkaranji, which was only eighteen miles east of Kolhapur, was held by the Chitpavan Joshi family. The ruler was styled Ghorpade. The jagirdar had been raised to the status of a First Class Sirdar, and had the right of addressing the Bombay government directly without going through the Kolhapur Darbar. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

[33] V. V. Rajwade, 'A Feudatory State of Western India', *Asiatic Review*, Vol. XXV (April 1929), p. 194.

[34] Latthe, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

[36] The phrase was Northcote's. Latthe, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

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agreed that the Maharaja should issue a *kharita* exempting the four larger feudatories, Vishalgad, Ichalkaranji, Bavda, and Kagal Senior, from the Darbar's judicial supervision, on condition that this exemption was to end with the lifetime of the ruling jagirdars, and that the necessity of state intervention did not arise.[37] The Darbar was thus robbed of the substance and left with the shadow. From Kolhapur's point of view, the settlement of 1904 was unsatisfactory, and Shahu resolved not to rest until he had persuaded Bombay to recognize the Darbar's full jurisdiction over its feudatories.

Shahu's policies against his feudatories could be connected with policies against Brahmins in the Kolhapur administration itself. The quarrel between the Maharaja and the Kolhapur Brahmin leaders came into the open in 1900, although the elements of conflict were present as early as 1894 when the Maharaja first launched his policy to help non-Brahmins. The pretext for the break was the refusal of the court priesthood and Brahmins generally to recognize the Chhatrapati family's claim to Kshatriya status and to perform certain religious rites, known as the vedokta ceremony, connected with this claim.[38] In October 1901 things came to a head when the Maharaja ordered that all religious ceremonies in the palace should accord with the vedokta form, and warned that those who failed to obey this order would be suspended from office.[39] Appa Sahib Rajopadhaye, the chief royal priest, studiously avoided the issue in public but privately engaged in a vigorous campaign to prove, by reference to history and custom, that the Chhatrapatis were in fact Sudras. When he learnt this, Shahu called on the Rajopadhaye to show cause why he should not be deprived of the inam lands granted to him as payment for his religious services.[40] The Rajopadhaye replied that, although the Chhatrapatis themselves might be Kshatriyas, the Maharaja, being only an adopted member of that family, did not qualify for this distinction. Faced with this open challenge to his status, the Maharaja had to make good his threat. On 6 May 1902 the Darbar resumed the inams of the Rajopadhaye as well as those of the Shri Shankacharya Swami—the head of the Kolhapur Math—who had sided with the Rajopadhaye in the vedokta controversy.[41] The Rajopadhaye immediately appealed to the Political Agent, Colonel Ferris, but Ferris saw no reason to interfere with 'the

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 262–5.

[38] The controversy began in October 1900, when one of the court priests omitted to purify himself by bathing in the river Panchganga before administering to the Maharaja's party. He alleged that they were mere Sudras who did not deserve a purified priest. *Ibid.*, pp. 186–7.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 193. [40] *Ibid.*, p. 194. [41] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

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legitimate authority of the Maharaja'.[42] The Rajopadhaye then appealed to the Government of Bombay, but on 6 October 1903 this application was also turned down.

The vedokta controversy brought the ill-feeling between the Darbar and the Brahmins to a head, but it was only one of a chain of incidents that helped to embitter relations between the two parties. Among them were the ordinance of July 1902, which reserved at least half the posts in the state service for non-Brahmins, the Maharaja's attempts after 1904 to create a non-Brahmin priesthood,[43] and the gradual suppression of all forms of political opposition which culminated in 1906 in the dismissal of Professor Bijapurkar, the Brahmin principal of the Rajaram High School.[44] From the Darbar's point of view devices such as the reservation ordinance were necessary measures to secure the advancement of the non-Brahmins. To the Brahmins on the other hand, they seemed more like persecution and an attempt to drive them out of office.[45] In the words of the Kolhapur weekly, *Samarth*, a Brahmin organ:

> A whole community, we mean the Brahman, is put under ban. . . . All possible offices are given to Marathas under the guise of encouraging the backward classes. When enough men of this class are not available, all possible and impossible offices are concentrated in the hands of one Maratha. A reign of terror is established which should horrify the Brahman class. There is an embitterment of relations with the Five Feudatories and the Four Jahagirdars, dissatisfaction among the people at large, discontent and a sense of insecurity among landowners of all sorts, no conscious advance in education, and a clear falling off in the efficiency of the medical department, woful [*sic*] mismanagement of the water works and confusion all round.[46]

By taking a strong line with the Brahmins in his state, Shahu placed himself in a difficult situation. Kolhapur Brahmins had allies among the feudatories and in Maharashtra at large, where the press was controlled mainly by Chitpavan editors. Faced by their mounting criticism, Shahu was anxious to keep on good terms with the Bombay government,[47] and Lamington predicted to Morley that the 'Maharajah

[42] Ferris to the Darbar, 19 February 1903, *ibid*, p. 204.

[43] Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Latthe, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 243–7.

[44] *Mahratta*, 17 June 1906, BNNR, 1906.

[45] There was good reason for their apprehension. In 1894 the Brahmins held sixty out of seventy-one posts in the General Department of the Darbar: by 1922 they filled only thirty-six out of ninety-five. The figures for the Khasgi Department show the same trend: forty-six out of fifty-two in 1894, and only forty-three out of one hundred and fifty-three in 1922. Latthe, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

[46] *Samarth*, 8 August 1906, BNNR, 1906.

[47] Clarke visited Kolhapur in March 1908; he was not greatly impressed by the

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w[oul]d almost certainly lack the courage to contend by himself against the Brahmins led by Tilak'.[48] Shahu could not confront the Brahmins single-handed. His policy towards them in Kolhapur, as much as his efforts to discipline his feudatories, required active support from the British. It was clearly in Shahu's best interests to play on the Bombay government's fears about Brahmin sedition, and to suggest closer collaboration in dealing with their common enemy.

Before 1902 such an eventuality had seemed remote. Years of humiliating management by Bombay's Political Department had left a legacy of hate and suspicion at the Kolhapur court which the authoritarian régime of Colonel Wray between 1897 and 1899 had done little to dispel.[49] Following the unsavoury episode of the Kolhapur poisoning case,[50] when Wray failed to pin the blame on the Darbar, Shahu successfully appealed to Bombay to replace the autocratic Colonel.[51] Wray's successor was the distinguished Orientalist, A. M. T. Jackson, seconded from the collectorship of Belgaum. But it was the substantive appointment of Ferris, on 1 April 1902, that marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. From this point relations between the Darbar and the government improved.

Colonel William Ferris, the man largely responsible for this improvement, had had an unremarkable career in the Bombay Service.[52] His main characteristic was a disarming simplicity which helped him to break down the barrier of distrust between the Maharaja and the British. This was Ferris's first important political appointment. He had every incentive to make a success of it, and to avoid antagonizing the Darbar as Wray had done.

In the event, Ferris won favour at court with those the *Samarth*

Maharaja, describing him as a 'large, simple, kind-hearted creature', the very 'antithesis of his ancestor Sivaji'. Clarke to Morley, 26 March 1908, Morley Papers, Mss. Eur. D 573 (42E), IOL; Malcolm Darling also considered him 'heavy and stupid', see M. L. Darling, *Apprentice to Power: India 1904–1908* (London, 1966), p. 246.

[48] Lamington to Morley, 17 August 1906, Lamington Papers, micro. 675, IOL.

[49] Darling, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[50] An employee of the Darbar was accused of conspiring to poison the Political Agent during a ceremonial dinner in the Darbar Hall. It was afterwards proved that the 'conspiracy' was staged by a Brahmin clique in an attempt to discredit the Darbar. Foreign Internal B, April 1898, 264–336, NAI; Latthe, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–23.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 122–3.

[52] Disciplined for inefficiency in 1892 by the Political Secretary Lee-Warner, Ferris was 'exiled' to Amreli in Kathiawar. His promotion in consequence was slow. In 1896 he was again reprimanded for 'indiscretions' committed while in Somaliland. Memorandum by W. Lee-Warner, 3 November 1892; Ferris to Lee-Warner, 4 December 1892, BP, 1893, 161, MRO.

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contemptuously dubbed 'the shikar party'.[53] In addition to the routine duties of a Political Agent, Ferris counselled and encouraged Shahu in his struggle with the Brahmins who were trying to blacken his character by allegations about his sexual habits. Soon Ferris became as much an object of derision in the Chitpavan press as the Maharaja himself. The *Mahratta* of 2 December 1906 caricatured the Political Agent as 'selected Angel sent by God to the wretched Brahmin-ridden State to assist the Maharaja in his holy work of regenerating the backward classes';[54] while the *Indu Prakash* of 24 October denounced the 'unholy alliance' between the Political Agent and his 'pliable tool', the Maharaja.[55] With Ferris behind them, the Darbar discarded any pretence at neutrality towards the Brahmins. Hitherto the Darbar had been the attacked; now it was the attacker.

Ferris was due to leave Kolhapur at the end of 1906, but in May the Maharaja asked Bombay to keep him on for another term. Supporting this proposal, Lamington told Morley, 'It w[oul]d be [a] long [time] before any new agent [could] . . . become familiar with the intrigues of the Brahmans or learn how to defeat their designs'; to refuse Ferris his extension might mean: 'A signal triumph . . . for the ablest and most disaffected sect in India.'[56] Calcutta was sympathetic; Dane agreed that: 'The attitude adopted by this leading Mahratta Chief in a centre of doubtful loyalty is a great source of strength for the British Government, and nothing should be done to alter the Maharaja's position.'[57] And so the Government of India granted Ferris an extension of service for a year. In July 1907 a further year's extension was granted, again on the grounds that special political circumstances were involved.[58]

With the question of Ferris's future safely settled, the Darbar at last felt it had sufficient British support to proceed against the Brahmin-led terrorist groups which operated within its frontiers. 'Last year', Clarke informed the Secretary of State, 'Kolhapur had a bad fit of nerves and came begging to me for an assurance of our support. He then braced himself up and showed some strength in dealing with his Brahmin conspirators.'[59] The first major success in the Darbar's campaign came

[53] *Samarth*, 9 May 1906, BNNR, 1906.
[54] *Mahratta*, 2 December 1906, BNNR, 1906.
[55] *Indu Prakash*, 24 October 1906, BNNR, 1906.
[56] Lamington to Morley, 17 August 1906, Lamington Papers, micro. 675, IOL.
[57] Minute by L. W. Dane, Foreign Secretary, 7 September 1906, Foreign General B, September 1906, 156–8, NAI.
[58] Foreign General B, October 1907, 3–4, NAI.
[59] Clarke to Morley, 26 July 1909, Morley Papers Mss. Eur. D 573 (42F), IOL.

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in May 1908, when agents of the Maharaja, working in the Central and Southern Divisions of the Bombay Presidency, found evidence of a bomb plot directed against the Bombay government and its native allies, including himself.[60] The following July the Darbar asked Bombay to send a company of British troops to strengthen the State's own forces.[61] However, the government did not care for the idea of lending troops, and in the end Shahu had to be content with the offer of some police to help him in his enquiries.[62]

In August 1908 Ferris left on furlough and was replaced by Major Frederick Wodehouse, perhaps the most highly-rated political officer in the Bombay Service—a measure of how important Bombay thought Kolhapur was.[63] Wodehouse took charge of the investigations in Kolhapur and worked hard to boost the uncertain morale of the local police. This policy rapidly bore fruit. On 23 August Professor Bijapurkar and his associates at the Rajaram College were arrested on various charges of fomenting sedition.[64] On 7 September a 'bomb arsenal', supposed by the Darbar to have been meant for Ferris's benefit, was discovered in the city of Kolhapur. The ringleaders of the plot were members of the Shivaji Club, inspired by the writings of Tilak and Bijapurkar. Their original plan had been to assassinate Ferris at the celebration held to mark the marriage of the Maharaja's daughter in March 1908. When this failed, one of the conspirators tried to shoot Ferris on board the train taking him to Bombay, but he missed.[65] The main instigator of the plot, a Chitpavan Brahmin, Damu Joshi, was captured shortly afterwards; however, his fellow-conspirator and fellow-Chitpavan, K. D. Kulkarni, found refuge in Ichalkaranji.[66] Thus the problems of sedition in Kolhapur and the independent

[60] Maharaja to Ferris, 12 May 1908. *Extracts from letters from and to His Highness the Chhatrapati Maharajasaheb of Kolhapur* (Private: Printed at the Kolhapur Record Office, n.d.), p. 2.

[61] Maharaja to Wodehouse, 16 July 1908, *ibid.*, p. 7.

[62] Clarke to Morley, 16 July and 24 July 1908, Morley Papers Mss. Eur. D 573 (42E), IOL.

[63] Wodehouse was chosen 'in preference to any of the officers above him on the list although the post . . . was considered to be next in importance to that of Agent to the Governor . . . in Kathiawar and . . . [was] generally filled by one of the most senior officers'. J. H. du Boulay, Political Secretary, Bombay, to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 28 June 1910, Political and Secret Subject Files, 1912, 4391, Pt I, IOL.

[64] Maharaja to Sir George Clarke, 23 August and 9 September 1908, *Extracts . . .*, pp. 11, 20. The charge was mainly based on an article in the *Vishvavritta* in which Bijapurkar exhorted his compatriots to 'take up arms and protect religion'. Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

[65] Chirol, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Latthe, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–9.

[66] Maharaja to L. Robertson, 7 September 1908, *Extracts . . .*, pp. 14–15.

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judicial status of the feudatories now came together; the conspirators were Chitpavans, and so was the Ghorpade of Ichalkaranji who gave them protection. Bombay now assured the Maharaja that he would get all the help he wanted to extradite and prosecute the fugitives.[67]

The climax to these moves was the trial of Bijapurkar and Joshi in October 1908. Despite every precaution the proceedings got off to a bad start. First, the Brahmin Chief Justice of Kolhapur released Bijapurkar on bail although it was known that he intended to abscond. Then prosecution was slow.[68] Shahu became gloomy and apprehensive:

> We want for the trial of these cases a Judge with a strength of character because all the cases are against [the] educated Brahmin class. You know all my principal judicial officers are B[rahmin]s and . . . in my talks with them I did not find they were strong enough.[69]

But Shahu was determined to push on with the trial, and the Bombay Government lent a hand by seconding a British Indian judge to try the case. The man they chose was Charles Kincaid, a Civilian judge and the future historian of the Mahrattas, who had already served in the states as Judicial Assistant in Kathiawar. With Kincaid's help, the trial was speeded up and the defendants were found guilty.[70]

Consequently, by the middle of 1909 things were going better for the Darbar in Kolhapur. The extremists were still active; but deprived of their most capable leaders they were no longer the threat that they had seemed in 1906 and 1907. Shahu could now turn his attention again to the problem of the feudatories. Having done good work for the British in chasing the extremists, he was ready to send in his bill. In raising this question, which the Bombay Government thought it had settled once and for all in 1903, Shahu found a convenient excuse in the fact that

[67] L. Robertson to Maharaja, 8 September 1908, *Extracts* . . ., p. 15. An encouraging response was also elicited from Muir-Mackensie, a member of the Governor's Council with whom Shahu was on terms of personal friendship. You may 'rely on having a perfectly free hand with your enquiries', he told the Maharaja. 'I recommend you to confide with equal freedom with other members of the Government. I can assure you that we are all prepared to support you and have every confidence in you.' Muir-Mackensie to Maharaja, 8 September 1908, *ibid*, p. 17.

[68] Maharaja to Muir-Mackensie, 18 December 1908, *Extracts* . . ., p. 39.

[69] Maharaja to Wodehouse, 3 October 1908, *ibid.*, p. 24.

[70] Bijapurkar was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, Joshi three years' rigorous imprisonment, and a third man, Joshirao, one and a half years' imprisonment. The subsequent prosecution of Joshi on a charge of conspiring to murder Ferris did not go so smoothly, and it required an appeal court to return a verdict of guilty on the accused, for which he received a further sentence of seven years. Maharaja to S. M. Fraser, 22 January 1909, *Extracts* . . ., p. 61. See also Latthe, *op. cit.*, pp. 334–6.

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several of the feudatories, notably Vishalgad and Ichalkaranji, had sheltered fugitives wanted in Kolhapur for crimes of sedition.

On 21 April Shahu wrote to Sir George Clarke, obliquely raising the question of these feudatory states by casting doubt on the loyalty of their chiefs.[71] By September 1909 Ferris was able to report some progress in the campaign.

> It may not be openly acknowledged but I fancy there is due appreciation of the way you have handled the Brahman problem, and the blood-letting at the extremity in Kolhapur has relieved the pressure at the centre of the system in Poona. There are many problems at present connected with Kolhapur in which I am deeply interested, not the least being that of . . . the relations of the feudatories to the state.[72]

Encouraged, the Maharaja next turned to his old confidante Muir-Mackensie. After repeating his allegations against Vishalgad and Ichalkaranji, Shahu explained his plan for exacting retribution from these disloyal subjects of the Crown. Ichalkaranji and Vishalgad should lose the powers of jurisdiction conferred on the larger feudatories in 1903. As these powers had been only 'recently conferred' Shahu did not anticipate 'much row' from the change. And it would represent a 'proper pinch for them'.[73]

In Council in December 1909, Muir-Mackensie brought up the question of 'rectifying' relations between Kolhapur and its feudatories. It was decided that the two jagirdars would each receive a 'grave warning' from the Political Agent, administered in the presence of the Maharaja or the Diwan of Kolhapur. If this failed to have the desired effect, then 'other steps' would be taken 'without hesitation'. It was further resolved that Kolhapur should be allowed to settle the question of residuary jurisdiction over its feudatories as it wished. Since the additional powers granted to the feudatories in 1903 were conferred as an 'act of grace', they entailed special obligations. In the Council's opinion these obligations had not been met. Accordingly, if Kolhapur now decided to withdraw these privileges, the Darbar would 'have the full support of Government in thus marking . . . [its] displeasure'.[74]

[71] 'It is said therein', he wrote, 'that if all Chiefs help them [the nationalists] like the Chiefs of Ichalkaranji and Vishalgad, the cause of the country would succeed much sooner. Taking this into consideration along with the entries in Vijapurkar's [*sic*] diaries I think it would be better for both parties if they be asked straight by the Political Agent to explain them.' Maharaja to Clarke, 21 April 1909, *Extracts . . .*, p. 64.

[72] Ferris to Maharaja, 15 September 1909, *Extracts . . .*, p. 80.

[73] Maharaja to Muir-Mackensie, 4 December 1909, *ibid.*, p. 89.

[74] Clarke to Maharaja, 13 December 1909, *Extracts . . .*, p. 92.

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Ferris congratulated the Maharaja but warned him to watch the feudatories closely since they would 'never rest' until they had recovered their former independence. So the Kolhapur Darbar would do well to 'make a note of everything they do wrong or fail to do right, so that . . . [the Darbar would] be prepared when on any change of Government [in Bombay] they endeavoured to get the matter reopened and reconsidered'.[75] This was sound advice. In 1925 the leading feudatories were to campaign vigorously to recover the powers given by the treaty of 1862 ratified in 1903, but lost in 1910.[76] On the eve of Independence the issue was still unresolved.

The non-Brahmin movement too continued to fight for caste privileges in Kolhapur. Silenced for a time by the defeats suffered at the hands of the Darbar in 1908, the Brahmins made a steady recovery throughout the war years; they re-emerged once more in 1919 as an active threat to the stability of the Maharaja's government.[77] In the districts, this renewed challenge took the form of a campaign engineered by Brahmin record-keepers, or *kulkarnis*, resenting the Darbar's repeated attempts to dislodge them from their hereditary office.[78] Before the Darbar had time to take action, a third party, the cultivators, intervened, launching their own non-co-operation campaign in retaliation against that of the *kulkarnis*. Riots ensued and the Darbar was forced to call for government assistance in restoring order. Prince and political officer again joined in an 'unholy alliance'.[79]

Thus 1910 does not mark the end of an era in Kolhapur history. But it was a time when many of the diverse elements of the picture began to dovetail together into an intelligible whole. The triumph of the Darbar over the feudatories was the outcome of the Maharaja's determination, reaffirmed after the setback of 1903, to win back the power and prestige that his state had had in the early days of the British connexion. But Shahu could not have won over the Bombay Government, had not Vishalgad and Ichalkaranji been implicated in the conspiracy to

[75] Colonel Ferris to Maharaja, 7 April 1910, *Extracts* . . ., p. 106.

[76] 'Opinion of Sir L. Scott re-claim for supervisory control by Kolhapur over Ichalkaranji', 28 November 1928, Records of the Diwan's Office, Kolhapur, Political and Feudatory Branch, 357 of 1929.

[77] This trend coincided with the return to favour of Appa Sahib Rajopadhaye, who resumed office as a stipendiary palace priest in 1917. Latthe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 459.

[78] In June 1918, the hereditary office of *kulkarni* was abolished on the grounds that many of these officials were stirring up opposition to the Darbar in the villages. Latthe, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 508–11.

[79] Cf. *Mahratta*, 25 July 1920. See also *The Passive Resistance in Kolhapur State* (Private and Confidential. Published by the Kolhapur Record Office, n.d.).

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overthrow the Government of the Kolhapur State. This conspiracy in turn derived much of its impetus from Brahmin resistance to the Darbar's policy of favouring non-Brahmins. The feudatory question, the agitation of the extremists, and the struggle between the Darbar and the Brahmins, were three different facets of the same problem. Only by seeing them as a whole can the complex web of Kolhapur politics be disentangled.

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